

## LA-UR-21-28306

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

Title: Beyond the building: NET Academy unveils innovative training center

Author(s): Lunn, Maureen Elizabeth

Intended for: Web

Issued: 2021-08-19

---

**Disclaimer:**

Los Alamos National Laboratory, an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer, is operated by Triad National Security, LLC for the National Nuclear Security Administration of U.S. Department of Energy under contract 89233218CNA000001. By approving this article, the publisher recognizes that the U.S. Government retains nonexclusive, royalty-free license to publish or reproduce the published form of this contribution, or to allow others to do so, for U.S. Government purposes. Los Alamos National Laboratory requests that the publisher identify this article as work performed under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Energy. Los Alamos National Laboratory strongly supports academic freedom and a researcher's right to publish; as an institution, however, the Laboratory does not endorse the viewpoint of a publication or guarantee its technical correctness.

## Beyond the building: NET Academy unveils innovative training center



*ALD Dave Eyler and group leader Evelena Valencia cut the ribbon to the new NET building alongside the NET team, Laboratory director Thom Mason, and Los Alamos Field Office manager Ted Wyka.*

In a shiny new conference room at the New Employee Training (NET) facility, guests ooh'd and ahh'd as technical project manager Ryan Chavez (ORI-1) showed off a state-of-the-art 4K screen used for employee training. As it brightened to life, Chavez and other members of the NET team discussed the strategy and intention behind finding the best technologies to support an engaging classroom setting for new hires.

"It was time to move beyond projectors – I had those when I was in college 20 years ago!" Chavez joked. "But this isn't about flashy new technology, it's about creating an environment for wholistic learning where new employees can build confidence for the work they'll do."

### **A hub for innovative learning**



*Group leader Evelena Valencia shares about the innovative approach to designing the new NET facility.*

Located on East Road in Los Alamos, the NET facility is newly leased space that was fully renovated by teams throughout ALDWP, ORI-1, and IFPROG. With innovative design elements, enhanced classrooms, and meeting rooms to support mission-centric training efforts, the NET building is a successful addition for LANL and the Los Alamos community.

The NET building ribbon-cutting took place on the sunny morning of July 28, and was attended by a vibrant crowd of NET staff, Lab leadership, and community members from around the Lab and the region. Group leader Evelena Valencia welcomed everyone and leapt into an all-inclusive list of those who supported the program, from its inception at TA-55 to the 2020 remodel – entirely amid the pandemic months – so the program could spread its wings into a building designed just for that purpose.

Prior to this new facility's opening, the NET Academy functioned out of a building located near TA-55, which opened in January 2020 after being retrofitted for the program. That space welcomed several cohorts who would be the first to engage in this new strategic training. Before the development of NET Academy, employees primarily learned from their coworkers on the job. NET allows for a more robust, systematic approach that shortens qualification time.



[Learn about the program's origins >](#)

“The unique adjustments and innovations that were made to our training programs have actually provided a foundation for versatility in the style and delivery of what we do,” Valencia said. “Coupled with the new gift of this building, we now have the ability to fully accommodate new employees in a modern setting that invites people in, encourages them to learn, and directly connect with the mission.”

The NET Academy has so far welcomed 153 workers, most of whom have already been using the new facility since it opened to new cohorts in May of this year.

### **Best use of the space**

TK before and after photo

The new facility consists of approximately 28,000 square feet of office and training space on the upper floor, 15,000 square feet of new office and training space, plus 6,200 square feet of storage space on the lower floor once construction is complete. The upper floor will accommodate up to 123 people at once, including the new employee cohorts, training staff, collaborators, and technical support. The lower floor will provide the facilities for experiential hands-on training, where employees will simulate work they'll do in the future.

The building's location in Los Alamos is a key benefit to the NET Academy, as the majority of its participants await Q Clearance, which ultimately provides them access to the Plutonium Facility. Offering off-site training allows onboarding to move forward without security restrictions.

“As we start moving back into our work spaces and scaling up our pit production mission, this facility should expedite the onboarding process and free up space for other important activities,” said Ted Wyka, National Nuclear Security Administration Los Alamos Field Office manager. “We look forward to this grand facility and its contributions for preparing our new staff members in their roles of maintaining our nuclear weapons production capability.”

### **Rooted in the community**

The NET facility also provides an opportunity for the Lab to consolidate its strong ties to the Los Alamos community. Guests at the ribbon cutting included Ryn Hermann from the Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce; County Council Chair Randall Rytty; Dan Ungerleider, the new Los Alamos County economic development administrator; UNM-LA Chancellor Cynthia Rooney; and representatives from the offices of Senator Martin Heinrich and Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernandez. The opening of the facility, along with the renovations of Laboratory-leased space at Central Park Square and elsewhere in the town, underline LANL's continued commitment to Los Alamos and the positive economic impact the Lab has in the county.

### **'Not just a facility'**

With hundreds of new positions being hired in ALDWP each year to support the pit and other plutonium missions, this type of training and on-boarding will be instrumental in meeting milestones safely and effectively. The NET facility's innovative approach will serve as a foundation to meet those goals – but beyond that, it will help to instill the Lab's vision and values as new employees come onboard.

"This is not just a facility, this is a concept," Dave Eyler (ALDWP) said. "The vision was to establish a game-changing way to qualify and train people. This is a big step on that journey."

[Check out the new facility in this video!](#)